

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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Making Conservation
a California Way of Life.

May 18, 2020

Mr. Farhad Mansourian
General Manager
Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit
5401 Old Redwood Highway, Suite 200
Petaluma, CA 94954

Dear Mr. Mansourian:

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) supports development of the Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) passenger rail corridor, including the transfer of freight rights and equipment from the North Coast Railroad Authority (NCRA) and the current short line freight rail operator, Northwestern Pacific Railroad Company (NWPCo) to SMART. To deliver this, Caltrans supports the action requested of the SMART Board to approve the Asset Transfer Agreement with NWPCo and the Baseline Agreement with the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA).

The 2018 California State Rail Plan (Rail Plan) establishes the framework for investing in rail over the next 20-years and beyond. The Rail Plan identifies the SMART corridor as an important element of the State's interregional passenger rail system, providing reliable mobility along the congested highway-101 corridor as well as key transit connections to rural communities in the north State. Since the wildfires of 2017 and 2018, SMART has also played an increasingly critical role in emergency response and evacuation transportation, as well as providing reliable commute options for displaced residents. The SMART owned east-west corridor provides an opportunity to further expand interregional connections and improve reliability and resiliency along the highway-37 corridor and is a priority in the State rail vision.

The State has invested over \$30 million through State Rail Assistance and the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program to fund significant improvements and expand the SMART system. Caltrans is also working with our State partners at CalSTA, the Department of Finance, the Department of Parks and Recreation, and the Department of General Services to support SMART in the purchasing of the freight rights along both the north-south, and east-west corridors. SMART

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ownership of the east-west corridor provides a path to connect SMART to the rest of the State network in Solano County. We are actively coordinating planning and investments with Solano County and Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority to deliver the benefits of seamless, integrated rail and transit connections. Additionally, the State has just awarded funding for improvements in Lake County that will be integrated with SMART as part of a larger network, specifically providing connectivity for more rural north state communities.

Caltrans is committed to partnering with SMART to pursue the expansion of the system as strategy for achieving the State's sustainability, mobility, and equity goals and improving connectivity throughout the state. We urge SMART to take the important step to accept the State's support for purchasing the freight rights and equipment on the corridor and to accept our partnership to realize the benefits of the State and regional investments that have already been made in the system.

Sincerely,



TOKS OMISHAKIN
Director